

Interviewed by Kathi Irving May 6, 2002

Transcribed by Marilyn Hunting May 6, 2002

Kathi Irving (KI): Today is May 6, 2002. I am with Meg Hatch. She is going to discuss some of her experiences on the river.

Meg Hatch (Meg): I have to sit and recall. My disk is full.

KI: Everything we tape, I will transcribe, then I'll take it and make a story out of it. I'll get it back to you and you can check it. You can just go ahead and start.

Meg: I have a bunch of little stories. Is that what you want? One of the fun stories: one of the local people here that was a mayor here for years, he used to go down with us all the time, at least three times a year.

KI: Are you going to name names?

Meg: Do you want me to?

KI: If it's okay with you. If you don't think there's a problem.

Meg: That's all right. He's passed away now and his family knows this story because part of them were with us actually. It was Av Kay. He was an old river-running friend of Bus Hatch. They sort of did this all the time. He used to take river trips about three times a year. In the spring he always asked me to go. So I would go and he was pretty much the boss of the trip.

KI: This was Bus who asked you to go or Av?

Meg: Oh, I'm sorry. It was Av. By then Bus had passed away. So he asked me to go and he was in control of the trip. It didn't matter what Hatch said, it was his trip and he was going to control it, which was all right because he didn't do anything wrong.

Anyway, we were camped at a camp called State Line and he didn't like it. He just hated the camp. It was hot, there was no shelter, he didn't like the sand, so he was a little grumpy and he was trying to get the attention of the whole group. Everyone had scattered to do tents and get ready for dinner. He was trying to get everyone's attention and he stood out on one of the boats and he put hands up like this [she raised her hands towards the sky] and he yelled, "All right, everybody, pay attention to me!" and about that time lightning struck a cliff, and the only tree on that cliff was on fire. We were all, "Yes, sir!"

He had power even *he* didn't know about. For years every everyone on that trip would talk about how Av was in charge of everything. We always laughed, because on his trips, you had to ride where he said you had to ride. He didn't dare deviate from his plan. He was definitely in charge.

There was also a book written about Don and some people from New York that came to do the whole river system before they dammed it. They started up in Green River and came

down.

KI: Who were they with, the people from New York?

Meg: Charles Eggert was one of them. There was a writer named Cyd Sumner and she wrote all the *Tammy* books. She wanted to go on the river. Well, in that particular time in history women couldn't go on the river with a whole group of men, but they decided to make an exception; maybe it would be all right.

There were no other women, it must have been bad for her, you know. They let her go and she maintained her female role on the boat. She had a parasol and she was very proper. It would have been in 1956-57, in that era. She was probably, at that time in her 40s. So you know, the idea of her going down the river and probably not wonderfully prepared for the experience... She was probably a little out of shape. But they let her go.

When she wrote a book about the experience, which was really good, she kept referring to "Dinah Shore" National Monument. It's even in the book now. It's called *Traveling in the Wilderness*.

In the middle of that, Don was called by Lowell Thomas to go to Pakistan and run the ? , so he left the trip early. I think they had to finish the following year. She was very disgruntled that Don would do that. I don't think she joined them for the last part. The way they used to do river running was not a real comfortable situation for her, I'm sure. Now, it's an all different ball game. Equipment is sophisticated and women don't think twice, women are like men, they go down the river. In that particular time frame, there were not that many women who actually did a river trip.

KI: When did you get into it?

Meg: I got into it about 1967. I married Don and we moved to Vernal.

KI: You married him and then got into it? I wondered if maybe you had an interest there and that's how you met him.

Meg: No, actually, he played saxophone in different bands in Salt Lake and he also taught school in the winter. We met in Salt Lake City. We were married and the following spring he said, "We are moving to Vernal." I said, "Oh..kay." I had some experience of river running but not like have had since. We moved to Vernal in 1970. We met in 1967, married in 1969, and moved here in 1970.

KI: Did he do the river stuff all year long once he moved here or did he teach here?

Meg: No, he did the river. I think, occasionally, in the winter, if he wasn't busy, they would call him to substitute teach and he kind of enjoyed that. Don loved kids. His reason for teaching wasn't necessarily to make money. In his mind, he loved those kids and he wanted them to learn everything he taught them. It was obvious. The kids, I still see his students, they would say, "Oh, Mr. Hatch was my favorite teacher." He was a dedicated teacher. And had summers off. After we moved here the river business experienced a boom. So it was pretty much full time.

KI: You mentioned something about the Kennedys.

Meg: Yes. I actually went on a trip with the Kennedys in Grand Canyon. Then they came up here, and they also did Middle Fork of the Salmon.

KI: Which Kennedys?

Meg: It was Bobby, and after Bobby was killed, Teddy. They always had the same people with them usually; reporters from the *San Francisco Examiner* and from the *L.A. Times*. They had Art Buchwald, the author; they had Willy Shepler, who was at the time the Olympic ski instructor.

KI: These were friends? Even the reporters were just friends, they weren't coming along to report?

Meg: No. The reporters, the real reporters, had to ride behind us or in front of us, they were never allowed. Stories always came out in the *San Francisco Examiner* and the *L.A. Times* from the people on the trip and Art Buchwald, he always wrote stories, not necessarily reporting what they did.

Also on these trips were Andy Williams and his ex-wife, Claudine, she always went. There was Jim Whitaker. They always had very famous people for friends; they were always on their trips.

KI: How often did they come?

Meg: Usually about once a year. They would do different rivers every year. They didn't come anymore as the younger generation grew up. They started doing rivers in the east. We had a call from Carrie Kennedy Cumo, she married the son of the mayor of New York. She called to inquire about a trip, then she found out she was going to have another baby, so she didn't ever come, but I understand they did do some rafting on the Green. It could be that it was private.

They remained in touch. Bobby Jr. and Joe were Bobby's sons and they always called Don about once a year, asked what was going on, did he need anything; assuming that we were Democrats.

KI: Can you think of any stories that happened with them?

Meg: Not really, they always had their own brand of fun. They loved the river and they loved the outdoors. We had Prince Albert from Monaco, fairly recently. He loved the outdoors; he was just a fun, fun, young man. He is not into himself, he likes to participate, do the work, very polite. One of the easiest celebrities we have ever had. He doesn't like being treated like a celebrity.

KI: How do celebrities want to be treated?

Meg: Some of them like the full deal. Like, if you could carry a whole hotel down, they would love it. Some of them want fresh towels every time they need one, they want speciality food. Of course, we can do all this. Our motto in our brochure is that we have taken a lot of celebrities,

many of whom you would recognize their names, but you are our chief celebrity. We have gotten away from publishing too much about what celebrities we take. We have a variety of people and we try to serve all of them.

KI: How many boats do you have?

Meg: We have about thirty that we use here.

KI: What part of the river? Your part is called Hatch River Expeditions and Ted runs Hatch River Grand Canyon.

Meg: We run the Yampa and the Green and Cataract Canyon. I was running the Middle Fork of the Salmon, but I sold it this year, it transferred to another outfitter. So we mainly base right here and do all the rivers here in Utah. They are great rivers. People don't understand how great we are right here. They want to do other rivers, of course, after they have done these. I think this is the most gorgeous scenery and the best water and the best over all trip, right here, down through Lodore. The Yampa's beautiful, but it doesn't last very long.

One of our most interesting celebrities was Colonel Coleman. He used to come down every spring. He was a survivor of the Bataan Death March. He was just the most fun person we ever had. He did river running every single year. I'm sure he's passed away by now, but he had survived that and wasn't in very good health, but he always made the trip and like to tell stories.

On the way to the river one time both of the tail lights were out on the trailer and there was no way to fix it or get it fixed on the weekend. Don tied flashlights on the back of the trailer and he put red handkerchiefs on them, you know, cowboy handkerchiefs, and put elastics around those, so when you turned the flashlights on it would show tail lights, and they got to the river. Everything is so sophisticated now that you wouldn't have those kind of problems.

KI: Have you ever had a really frightening experience?

Meg: Personally, I have. I was thrown in the water going through Hell's Half Mile. I swam clear to the bottom to the rock pile. I was on a commercial trip, so I couldn't show how my adrenalin was pumping real hard to get me to the bottom. I kept thinking I was going to be chewed by rocks. I didn't have a scratch on me. I stood up and everyone said, "Are you all right, are you all right?" And I said, "Yes, I'm fine, I just needed a shower." Things like that, when you're on a commercial river running, you wouldn't react, it would just ruin the trip. So if you're hurt, you just don't pay any attention. I have moved snakes out of the way, so people can't see them. You might have those people on the trip that are frightened. You move them and they usually come back. At least, you have time to tell them, "Okay, there is a snake that lives here and he'll probably come and visit the camp." Some people go to bed for the evening and some are interested in seeing what the snake looks like.

It's been an interesting thing. I majored in music and art. I didn't major in river running, for sure, but I seemed to have inherited it.

KI: Do your kids work with you now?

Meg: I have a daughter that does. The boys have gone to college or moved on to more profitable businesses. They want to be here, but —it's just not a good family thing. When you have

children and a wife to take care of, you need to be home more than you are, even though it's only three months. It's still a hard job for a marriage. It takes a special person to be an outfitter that has a family.

KI: What do you look for when you hire someone to guide?

Meg: Qualifications and experience are two biggies.

KI: How do they get experience?

Meg: Just by doing it and by having years of experience. Where they have worked before you is always good. You know that some outfits do extensive training and extensive first aid and all of the requirements that they need and some don't. Most outfitters do it the right way because we are regulated by so many government agencies. We look for that experience and a person that loves people, because you have to love people, you have to be a good cook, you have to love rowing a boat on the river. There's just a lot to being a guide.

KI: Do you train anyone from the ground up?

Meg: Yes. We have. We are doing two or three this year because the young men impressed us and they had a little bit of experience.

KI: Can you think of a favorite memory or time on the river?

Meg: I think my favorite time on the river was through the Gates of Lodore in 1970s. Don and I went down with a group of people and he showed me every spring along the river. Things that I would never have known had he not. We had to hike to a lot of it, natural springs, areas that are not there now. There was a cabin that has since burned down. All kinds of areas that we explored. Some I can't even remember how to get there. I don't get to go as much as I like to. The beauty of the canyon just really hit me in the heart. It is a beautiful canyon. I had been down in Oregon, Idaho, and that canyon is still the most beautiful canyon, depending what time of year you go.

One time, I think it was the same trip, we were camped at a place called Rippling Brook and a rock fell from a cliff across from us. It was like having an earthquake and I was very frightened. Nothing happened. It fell in the river and the next day you could see the damage from the little wedge that fell. I guess that was one of those experiences you don't have very often. You know, in the canyon everything echoes and it's so quiet and it sounded like whole mountain was coming down. You lay there and you think, "Oh, no, it's coming down on me next!"